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8 May 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Rostow and McNaughton Papers for the 8 May Meeting

1. These two papers are variants on a single set of themes and should be considered in tandem. Rostow's, the broader and more thoughtful, should be read first. McNaughton's, a piece of special pleading for a particular course of action (restricting our bombing to route packages 1 and 2), should be read second.

2. Rostow's strategy statement (his Section I), unwittingly pinpoints one of our major misconceptions and, hence, major policy errors. He notes (my underlining):

"To hasten the decision in Hanoi to abandon the aggression, we have been trying to do two other things:

(i) to limit and harass infiltration; and

(ii) to impose on the north sufficient military and civil cost to make them decide to get out of the war earlier rather than later. "

This gets out of our field as intelligence officers, but the US Government would be well advised to remember the old adage about less haste, more speed. Specifically we should not keep looking for the single set of blows which will raise the cost level above the point Hanoi is willing to tolerate because there probably is no such threshold figure and our search for it involves a fundamental misreading of the Lao Dong Politburo's mind. Instead, what we need to do is

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convince the Politburo that so long as it continues its attempt to establish political control over South Vietnam by force of arms, it is going to have to pay a continuing price on its own home ground, i. e., North Vietnam. A recognition or acceptance of cost projection over indefinite time is much more likely to change Hanoi's mind than any particular damage level. Our whole discussion of optimum aerial strategy would benefit from an adoption of this approach to the problem in lieu of the one now (perhaps unconsciously) employed.

3. Rostow's comments re "what we agree upon" also require some comment.

a. To speak of a US desire for transition to "constitutional government" in South Vietnam is to confuse form with substance. What we really need is not a particular institutional structure but an effective government with roots among the bulk of South Vietnamese people and some internationally acceptable claim to a valid mandate for rule. This may sound like quibbling, but it actually involves a basic matter of political objective.

b. The real object of encouraging the South Vietnamese to be more imaginative in the reconciliation sphere is that of eliminating Hanoi's base of serious southern support. If this can be done, Hanoi will be forced to rely increasingly on external, quasi-conventional military pressure -- the easiest type of pressure for us to cope with.

4. The nub of the 8 May meeting will probably be which of three bombing options to follow. In Rostow's words:

a. "Closing the top of the funnel." ("Under this strategy we would mine the major harbors and, perhaps, bomb port facilities and even consider blockade.")

b. "Attacking what is inside the funnel" ("This is what we have been doing in the Hanoi-Haiphong area for some weeks.")

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c. "Concentration in route packages 1 and 2." (See attached map.)

5. McNaughton's paper is a piece of advocacy for course c, based on the assumptions that we have already struck (almost) all of the worthwhile military targets in northern North Vietnam save the ports, that the military gain from destroying additional military targets north of 20° will be slight, and that continuation of attacks north of 20° will strengthen rather than diminish Hanoi's will. In defense of the latter thesis McNaughton cites Consul General Rice, Sir Robert Thompson, and Ne Win, none of whom (especially the latter two) are particularly expert sources on North Vietnamese opinion.

6. McNaughton is right in saying we have now hit virtually everything worth hitting in northern North Vietnam, though this does not prove we should henceforth attack only option c targets. I do not buy his argument on Hanoi's will. You can argue, with at least equal justification, that if the Lao Dong should determine (from our adoption of c) that domestic (US) and international pressure has forced the US to curtail its bombing program the Lao Dong's determination to persist in its present strategy will be enhanced.

7. Rostow, more subtly (and cogently) argues for c, with an admixture of b whenever we have new b targets that make sense.

8. Essentially, I share Rostow's view. We should:

a. Concentrate on route packages 1 and 2.

b. Do some restrikes of selected targets north of the 20° line, such as restrikes of repaired power plants. (I would personally advocate knocking out the Hanoi plant before we phase down.) These restrikes should be initiated for psychological/political effect and to prevent the North Vietnamese from completely re-programming the human and material assets devoted to protection and damage repair.

c. I personally believe we should continue some interdiction of the rail and road lines coming in from China.

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d. On the Haiphong port, natural silting may soon accomplish much that mining would achieve, at infinitely less political risk to us. We should, however, be prepared to knock out any dredges brought into use to relieve the silting problem.

9. On notification, as indicated in an earlier memo, I would advocate informing both the North Vietnamese and the Soviet Union -- not just the Soviets -- along the lines suggested in McNaughton's final paragraph.

George A. Carver, Jr.
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Attachment

Orig - DCI w/att
1 - DCI Audit Project file w/o att
1 - GAC Chrono w/o att ✓

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